



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

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PSC APPROVES AGREEMENT REACHED IN MANCHESTER NATURAL GAS INCIDENT

Jefferson City (July 30, 2004)--Laclede Gas Company has modified its inspection procedures and work documentation forms requiring its crews to verify proper installation (and correction if necessary) of service tees similar to the one involved in a natural gas incident in Manchester, Missouri, under an agreement approved by the Missouri Public Service Commission.

The agreement resolves issues contained in a PSC Staff complaint filed in connection with a December 11, 2003, incident at #6 Hagers Mill Court. Staff alleged in its complaint that Laclede had violated Commission rules when it installed the service "tee" used to serve the residence at #6 Hagers Mill Court.

The PSC Staff Report noted that based on inspections of work performed by the same crew in the weeks immediately preceding and succeeding the incident site installation, no additional service tees were identified with a missing tubular stiffener. The PSC Staff believes that the improper installation at the incident site was the result of an isolated incident and was not the result of improper procedures or equipment specified and regularly used by Laclede.

Background: On December 11, 2003, a natural gas explosion and fire occurred at #6 Hagers Mill Court in Manchester, Missouri. The explosion and subsequent fire destroyed the single-family residence and damaged adjacent residential structures. Four people in the residence at the time of the explosion sustained various injuries. There were no fatalities.

The PSC Staff determined, based upon its investigation, that the probable cause of the incident was the escape of natural gas from the service tee connection for the service line providing natural gas service to #6 Hagers Mill Court. The escape of the natural gas, according to the PSC Staff Report, was due to a pullout of the service line from the compression coupling at the natural gas service tee. The Staff Report stated: "Subsequent investigation revealed that the joint between the service tee and service line had not been assembled properly during initial installation in 1974. In the time interval since installation, tree roots had placed longitudinal force on the service line and the pullout resulted."

According to the report, the tree and associated tree roots were growing in the location of the distribution main, service tee and service line. Staff noted that the longitudinal forces eventually exceeded the pullout strength of the compression coupling. Staff stated in its report: "While the forces imparted by the tree and roots may have been sufficient to result in a failure of a properly installed fitting at some point in time, the absence of a tubular stiffener significantly increased the likelihood of occurrence." Commission regulations required that an internal tubular stiffener be used in plastic pipe when assembling a compression coupling.